

MINUTES
JOINT MEETING
OF THE
HOUSE AND SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION

ADEQUACY

Tuesday, January 10, 2012
9:00 A.M.
Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Jimmy Jeffress, the Chair of the Senate Interim Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Jimmy Jeffress, Chair; Senator Mary Anne Salmon, Vice Chair; Senator Joyce Elliott; and Senator Johnny Key.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative Johnnie Roebuck, Vice Chair; Representative Duncan Baird; Representative Jerry Brown; Representative Les Carnine; Representative Ann Clemmer; Representative Robert Dale; Representative Jane English; Representative Debra Hobbs; Representative Karen Hopper; Representative Donna Hutchinson; Representative Randy Stewart; Representative Tim Summers; and Representative Tommy Wren.

NON-VOTING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative John Catlett; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Jeremy Gillam; Representative Justin Harris; Representative Homer Lenderman; Representative Tiffany Rogers; and Representative Garry Smith.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE: Senator David Burnett; Senator Randy Laverty; Senator Larry Teague; Senator David Wyatt; Representative Tommy Lee Baker; Representative Nate Bell; Representative John Burriss; Representative Linda Collins-Smith; Representative Billy Gaskill; Representative Sheilla Lampkin; Representative Buddy Lovell; Representative Jim Nickels; Representative Betty Overbey; Representative Mike Patterson; Representative James Ratliff; Representative Nate Steel; Representative Tommy Thompson; Representative Darrin Williams; and Representative Marshall Wright.

Senator Jimmy Jeffress reminded the Committees that the Adequacy Study for the next biennium is underway and reiterated that the entire membership of the House Interim Committee on Education and the Senate Interim Committee on Education will be participating in the study. Noting that there will be frequent meetings throughout the calendar year, he strongly encouraged the members' attendance and active participation going forward. Senator Jeffress requested that Mr. Mark Hudson come forward and outline the plans for the meetings.

Mr. Mark Hudson, Senior Legislative Analyst, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Mr. Hudson called members' attention to a memorandum, dated November 21, 2011, which outlined meeting dates for the Committees from Monday, January 9, 2012 through Tuesday, October 9, 2012. He said the meetings are formatted to provide ample opportunity for the Committees to address both adequacy and non-adequacy issues. Non-adequacy issues will be discussed in the afternoon of the first Monday of the month, and adequacy issues will be discussed in the morning of the first Tuesday of the month. This will ensure the development of a clear record of adequacy-related meetings for the research staff to use in drafting the report for November 1, 2012.

Senator Jeffress thanked Mr. Hudson.

Senator Jeffress made note of a document in the members' packets that lists adequacy issues in areas that will be covered in presentations either today or at other times during this study: Common Core and Accreditation, Minimum age for admittance to kindergarten, ACTAAP and School Improvement, Other School Assessment and Support Systems, Special Ed Issues, Facilities, and Transportation.

Discussion Issues Related to Student Learning

Dr. Laura Bednar, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. After addressing various policy and programmatic developments in education at both the state and national levels, Dr. Bednar presented an overview of Common Core and Accreditation. She referred to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (Common Core) as a "game-changer" that provides a stimulus to rethink the structure and operations of the public education system. Dr. Bednar noted that last week the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) released the invitation to negotiate, a critical step towards the on-time delivery of the PARCC assessments being developed for Common Core. Dr. Bednar said the timeline for implementation of Common Core and the PARCC assessments is proceeding on schedule in Arkansas: K-2 this year, grades 3-8 in SY2012-2013, and grades 9-12 in SY2013-2014, with full PARCC assessments being operational in SY2014-2015. Dr. Bednar gave the members the Web site address of PARCC, www.parcconline.org, as an excellent resource for additional information.

Dr. Bednar concluded her presentation by noting that it will take time to go through and discuss all issues associated with the implementation of Common Core. She stated that the Commissioner, in order to avoid roadblocks and move forward, has asked that all divisions of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) keep him informed of the specific issues and problems that need immediate attention.

Dr. Bednar introduced other ADE staff present at the meeting:

Mr. Elbert Harvey, Public School Program Coordinator, Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (ACSIP)

Ms. Martha Kay Asti, Interim Associate Director, Division of Special Education

Mrs. Estelle Mathis, Director, Division of Learning Services, Education Renewal Zones/Scholastic Audit

Following the presentation, a discussion took place on topics that included:

- Frameworks in Common Core for pre-K; matching of objectives; involving pre-K,
- Clarification of assessments,
- Establishing additional bandwidth requirements,
- First graduating class covered under Common Core standards,
- Testing on current standards while transitioning to Common Core,
- Impact on Praxis™ tests,
- Educating parents to understand what’s going on; parental involvement,
- Subjects tested in grades 3-12 in SY2014-15,
- Impact on professional development; new delivery of professional development,
- On track for digital quarterly assessments,
- Transitional platform for dealing with proficiency needs; intervening at an earlier age,
- Keeping track of gender differences in professional development,
- Availability of Common Core video,
- “The Death and Life of the Great American School System, How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education,” by Diane Ravitch; availability of Ms. Ravitch’s research from ADE,
- Arkansas has been an example for other states in early childhood, and
- Comparison in funding for proposed changes.

In conclusion, Dr. Bednar discussed kindergarten start dates and options for earlier starts.

Senator Jeffress thanked Dr. Bednar for her presentation and commended her for her diligence and hard work.

Senator Jeffress announced, at the suggestion of staff, that comments on ACTAAP and School Improvement, Other School Assessment and Support Systems, and Special Ed Issues will be covered at the February meeting.

Discussion of Issues Related to Academic Facilities and Transportation

Mr. Tony Wood, Deputy Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Mr. Wood discussed the history and impact of the Master Plan and Partnership Program. Using a handout, Mr. Wood reviewed the funding for various facilities-related programs, including the Partnership Program expenditures outlined below:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Approximate Number of Approved Projects</u> | <u>State Financial Participation</u> <i>(in millions)</i> |
|-------------|--|--|
| 2006 – 2007 | 1,160 | \$ 207 |
| 2007 – 2009 | 378 | \$ 268 |
| 2009 – 2011 | 246 | \$ 110 |
| 2011 – 2013 | 219 | \$ 190 |

Mr. Wood related that the state and local school districts had spent in excess of a billion dollars to support facilities for children in Arkansas. He provided details about the breakdown of the 219 projects for 2011–2013, and discussed the \$457 million of “seed money,” expenditures and the recurring revenue

stream, and the debt service funding supplement. As a summary statement of where the state is in regard to funding of facilities, Mr. Wood said at that point in the future when every 2011-2013 project currently under construction in Arkansas or being planned by all districts has been completed, and every invoice has been paid, the facilities fund would have a balance slightly in excess of \$26 million. He then discussed projections for the next biennium. Mr. Wood went on to discuss issues regarding review and possible revision of the facilities program.

Dr. Charles Stein, Director, Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, walked the Committees through a PowerPoint presentation of the Master Plan and Partnership Program to show how it is meeting school districts' needs. He covered:

- Master Plan/Partnership Program, Two-Year Cycle
- Master Plan Tabs
- Partnership Program
- Warm, Safe, and Dry Projects
- Space Projects
- Program of Requirements (POR)
- Suitability Analysis
- Partnership Program – State Financial Participation Determination
- Ranking of Approved Projects
- Educational Facilities Partnership Fund, Committed Projects (*in Dollars*)
- Educational Facilities Partnership Fund, Ending Fund Balances (*in Dollars*)

A discussion ensued following the presentation. It included the following topics:

- ✓ Amount of projects that did not qualify for funding in 2011-2013; the opportunity to reapply,
- ✓ How the wealth index is determined; financial support through millage,
- ✓ Factoring in needed improvements when a school is in distress or undergoing consolidation,
- ✓ Partnership dollars and North Little Rock School District's plan to build a new school system,
- ✓ Understanding that unintended consequences could befall a school district caught in the dilemma of pursuing millage for a bond issue for facilities and not knowing what degree of state commitment is available; making a case for adequacy requirements and not being successful in passing the bond issue,
- ✓ Rules for closing a school when it falls below 350 Average Daily Membership (ADM); consideration of issue in the Master Plan/Partnership Program,
- ✓ Availability of opportunity for Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD) to pursue a partnership project, even though under state control,
- ✓ Under current law, fiscal distress and academic distress not jeopardizing a school district's approval to draw money out of the facilities fund,
- ✓ Specific things learned during implementation that need to be revisited; confidence level that what's been put in place addresses needs of those districts that have been disenfranchised,
- ✓ Meeting the law vs. equitable facilities for children,
- ✓ Ability of state to reclaim Partnership Program costs from a school that has been closed,
- ✓ Rationale for minimum funding set at \$150,000,
- ✓ Availability of facilities maintenance records for making informed decisions for facilities funding; adequacy of records, and

- ✓ Basis for minimum project cost.

Senator Jeffress thanked Dr. Stein for his report.

Mr. Tony Wood was recognized, and made a few brief comments on Transportation. He talked about the funding that is being provided this year that is in excess of what is provided in the Matrix. He discussed the one-time sum of \$500,000 that will be committed for excess transportation costs for SY2011-2012, following approval by the Rules Committee. Mr. Wood provided an explanation of how the numbers were arrived at in determining which school districts in the state will participate in the funding and the amounts to be received.

In the brief discussion that followed, topics included: actual overages, requirements as to distances that school districts can run school buses, tax dollars saved by having a statute, and state vs. local control on regulating transportation.

Senator Jeffress thanked Mr. Wood for his remarks.

Senator Jeffress announced that the next joint meeting of the Senate Interim Committee on Education and the House Interim Committee on Education on Adequacy would be at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 7, 2012, in Room 171 of the State Capitol in Little Rock.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.